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Georgia's Minimum Standards for
Local Comprehensive Planning



2.27.2015 | Adriane Wood, DCA

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New standards for local plans

Why?

- Simpler
- More Flexible
- Custom Fit
- Continuity

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Tools provided

- Statistical and demographic data provided by DCA for FREE, upon request
- Supplemental Planning Recommendations
- Quality Community Objectives (QCOs)
- <http://www.dca.ga.gov/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/spr.asp>

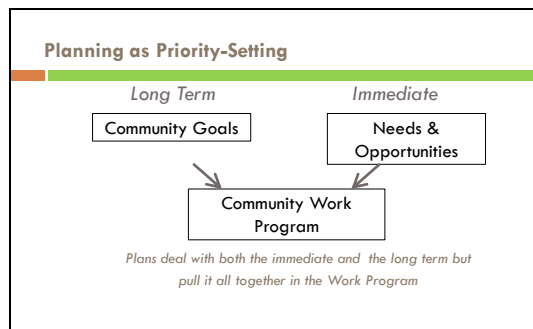
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Data tool example	
Name	Type
BerkeleyCity	File folder
2010_Census_Profile	Microsoft Office Excel Vis...
ACS_Housing_Summary	Microsoft Office Excel Vis...
ACS_Population_Summary	Microsoft Office Excel Vis...
Business_Summary	Microsoft Office Excel Vis...
Demographic_and_Income_Comparison_Profile	Microsoft Office Excel Vis...
Executive_Summary	Microsoft Office Excel Vis...
Housing_Profile	Microsoft Office Excel Vis...

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The Standards: Overview	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Menu of Plan Elements (Community Chooses)• Each Element Has Only Brief, Flexible Guidance• Only Three Elements are Required of All• Five Elements are Required for Some Communities (depending on local conditions)• Substitution of Existing Plans/Elements Encouraged• No Update Required for Some Plan Elements• Other Elements Updated Every Five Years• RCs and communities can adapt the rules to fit local needs (e.g. plans may be significantly scaled-down for very small communities)	

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Composition of a plan

FROM THE RULES

- **Required and Optional Plan Elements.** Each community's comprehensive plan must include the required plan elements specified Each community is encouraged to go beyond these minimum required elements and supplement its comprehensive plan with other plan elements ...to make the overall plan a good fit for the community.

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**Visual Concept by Ozgur Basak Altan, Pe

Menu of Plan Elements

REQUIRED for all **COMMUNITY GOALS** **NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES** **COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM**

REQUIRED for some communities

..... **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ELEMENT** **LAND USE** **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** **TRANSPORTATION** **HOUSING**

OPTIONAL Elements (Examples)

TARGET AREAS	PUBLIC SAFETY	GREENSPACE	EDUCATION	RECREATION	HUMAN SVCS	NATURAL RES
INTER-GOVERNMENT COORDINATION	SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT	INFRA-STRUCTURE & FACILITIES	COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY	HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES	DISASTER RESILIENCE	

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Community Involvement a.k.a.Public Participation

FROM THE RULES

- "Each element of the comprehensive plan **must** be prepared with opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders and the general public, in order to ensure that the plan reflects the full range of community needs and values. The three steps ...are ...
 - (a) Identifying the Stakeholders....
 - (b) Identifying the Participation Techniques....
 - (c) Conducting the Participation Program....

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Public Participation: Why is this important?

- ▣ Plan should reflect **COMMUNITY's** vision
- ▣ It's the people's plan (as in "We the people...")
- ▣ **Public ownership**—investment of energy/effort
- ▣ **Broad input** from varied sectors—"buy in"
- ▣ **Public support** of the plan encourages its use by officials

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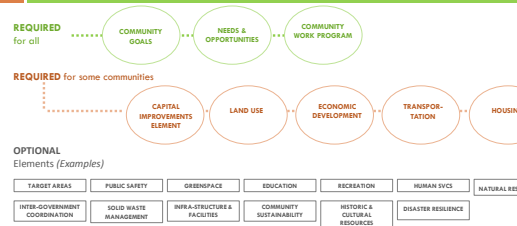
Public Participation

- The submitted plan must document what the community did (ideally in an appendix)
- Report must include (at minimum):
 - list of stakeholders involved
 - steering committee composition
 - number and types of participation events
 - who attended participation events
 - show the participation in developing Community Goals
 - show that a SWOT was used to generate Needs and Opps

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Menu of Plan Elements

^{***}Visual Concept by Ozgur Basak Alkan, Pe



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Standards & Examples

REQUIRED...
for all

COMMUNITY GOALS

NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

- ☐ REQUIRED FOR ALL communities
- ☐ 1 or a Combination of any of the following:
 - ☐ General Vision Statement
 - ☐ List of Community Goals
 - ☐ Community Policies
 - ☐ Character Areas & Defining Narrative
- ☐ Create this element ONCE potentially drawing from previous plans.

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General Vision Statement

FROM THE RULES

☐ “General Vision Statement. ...paints a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction.”

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General Vision Statement


“We want our community to be a happy, friendly place where people want to live, play, and do business.”

This is useless to the community.

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General Vision Statement

Or, you can provide a much more detailed narrative like this. This comes from Whitfield County.



This goes on for another page and a half.....

VISION STATEMENT - A statement of Goals, Objectives, Plans, Policies & Values

The County Government is an independent local government, established by the Georgia Constitution and subject to the oversight of the Georgia General Assembly. It is a political subdivision of the State of Georgia, created by the Georgia General Assembly. It is a political subdivision of the State of Georgia, created by the Georgia General Assembly. It is a political subdivision of the State of Georgia, created by the Georgia General Assembly.

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Structuring the Comp Plan

Goals – Policies – Activities

- **Goals** articulate a set of broad, overarching ideals for which the community is working.
- **Policies** provide ongoing guidance and direction to local officials for making decisions that support achieving the community's vision/goal.
- **Implementation Activities** are specific activities the community plans to undertake (e.g. activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems) in order to implement policies and achieve goals.

[illegible]

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Structuring the Comp Plan

Goals – Policies – Activities

- **Goal 1:** Our community will employ innovative tools and processes to attract new businesses that complement our Vision and retain existing businesses.
- **Policy 1:A → Collaborate with the development authority**
 - Activity 1:A(1) Increase funding to existing façade restoration program
- **Policy 1:B → Ensure that review processes do not unnecessarily hamper development.**
 - Activity 1:B(1) Develop a simple process
 - Activity 1:B(2) Revise our zoning ordinance to provide an "expedited review"

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List of Community Goals

FROM THE RULES

- **List of Community Goals.** Include a listing of the goals the community seeks to achieve.

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Examples of Community Goals (DCA's QCOs)

- **Economic Prosperity:** ...development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.
- **Resource Management:** ...the efficient use of natural resources and ...protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Efficient Land Use:** maximize the use of existing infrastructure ...minimize the ...conversion of undeveloped land...
- **Local Preparedness:** ... put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve
- **Sense of Place:** ...protect and enhance our community's unique qualities.
- **Regional Cooperation:** ...cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.
- **Housing Options:** ...provide an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing.
- **Transportation Options:** ...address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all ...
- **Educational Opportunities:** ...make educational and training opportunities readily available ...
- **Community Health:** ...ensure that all community residents...have access to critical goods and services....

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Using the QCOs as a Resource for Community Goals

Economic Prosperity: Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

Local Preparedness: identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, wastewater) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

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Using the QCOs as a Resource for Community Goals

Economic Prosperity: Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. **Factors to consider when determining suitability** include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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Community Policies

FROM THE RULES

Community Policies. ...provide **ongoing guidance and direction** to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Goals.

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Community Policies: Good Examples

Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis....
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place
- Use land efficiently to avoid the cost and problems associated with urban sprawl
- Gateways and corridors will provide a "sense of place" for our community
- Creation of recreation facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development....

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Character Areas

FROM THE RULES

□'Character Area' means a specific geographic area or district within the community that:

□has **unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced**

□has **potential to evolve into a unique area** with more intentional guidance of future development through adequate planning and implementation; or

□**requires special attention** due to unique development issues....

□Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more **detailed, small-area planning** and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the Community Goals.

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The Character Area Map

FROM THE RULES

• **Character Areas Map and Defining Narrative.** Identify and map the boundaries of existing or potential character areas (see definition in Chapter 110-12-1-.05) **covering the entire community**, including existing community sub-areas, districts, or neighborhoods. ...Community improvement districts, tax allocation districts, Livable Centers Initiative planning areas, designated redevelopment areas and the like are good candidates for delineation as character areas.

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The Character Area Map

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

• **It's a map—apply basic, cartographic, common sense**

– No blank spots,

– Map & Legend should match,

– Map and Text (Defining Narrative) should match.

– At a high enough resolution to be easily read, not blurry

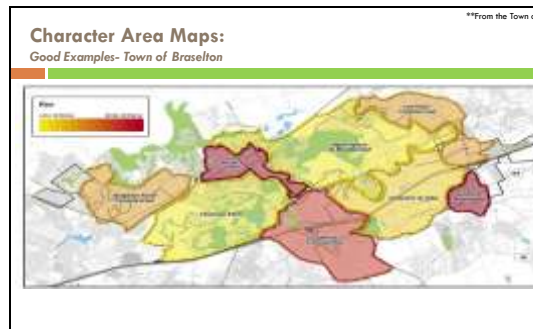
*A properly oriented North-arrow is always handy

• **A high-quality map can do more than simply illustrate boundaries . .**

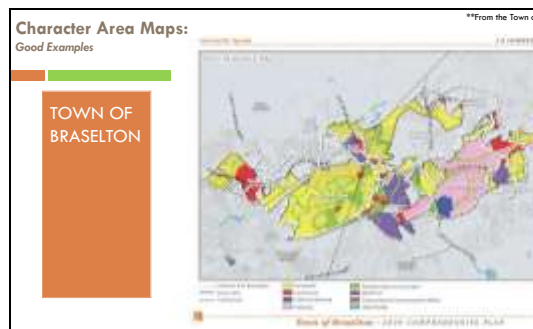
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Character Area Defining Narrative

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

- Detailed discussion of EACH character area presented on the map
- Required to Include
 - Basic description with text and **illustrations/photos/etc.**
 - Allowable land uses
 - Implementation measures

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Character Areas

Defining
Narrative
Good Example

Mathematical Logic (Continuing)

When the results of the study clearly indicate that development will take place (due to any of the identified factors) then the risk becomes a probability that can be taken as a sign of threat!

Developmental Patterns

- Plant growth and development are influenced by environmental conditions such as temperature, light, water, and nutrients
- Plants have evolved various mechanisms to adapt to different environments and stresses
- Understanding plant growth and development is essential for improving crop yields and quality
- Factors influencing plant growth and development include:
 - Genetic factors (e.g., hormones, enzymes)
 - Environmental factors (e.g., light, temperature, water, nutrients)
 - Biotic factors (e.g., pathogens, pests)
- Key concepts in plant growth and development include:
 - Photosynthesis: the process by which plants convert light energy into chemical energy
 - Respiration: the process by which plants release energy from stored carbohydrates
 - Transpiration: the loss of water vapor from plants
 - Growth: the increase in size and mass of a plant
 - Development: the changes in form and function of a plant over time

[illegible]

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Character Areas

Defining
Narrative
Good Example

Engineering Test Book

Conservation Subdivision Ordinance
 Approved by council and implemented with a resolution

Research has shown that low back pain is associated with a significant portion of sick and absent days, with costs associated with lost productivity, medical care, and disability. This is a significant public health problem.

Maximum Block Length, Width and/or Perimeter

Landscaping Guidelines/Ordinance
 2012-01-01: The City of San Jose has adopted a new ordinance that requires all new construction to be designed to be aesthetically pleasing and to blend with the surrounding environment. The ordinance is located at: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11111/Landscaping-Ordinance>

Adopt Inclusive Land Use Regulations

Accepting responsibility for one's life is a further percentage of effectiveness, which is a natural life course development.

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Needs and Opportunities

REQUIRED for all COMMUNITY GOALS **NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES** COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

•Use previous “Issues/Needs & Opportunities”, current statistical and demographic data, and the QCOs as starting points.

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Needs and Opportunities

FROM THE RULES: Needs and Opportunities are required for all local governments

- updates required every five years.
- locally agreed upon list of Needs and Opportunities the community intends to address. ...
- The list must be developed by **involving community stakeholders** in carrying out a **SWOT** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or similar analysis of the community.

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Stakeholder Involvement Process

S
W
O
T

Strengths
Weaknesses
Opportunities
Threats

From the community's point of view! Involve the citizen and organizations that make up your community.

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Needs and Opportunities

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

- ❑ Should be comprehensive
- ❑ A simple list is *totally* acceptable—but you can be creative
- ❑ It should make sense for the community
- ❑ **NOT** a “to-do” list (that comes later)

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Needs and Opportunities

Good Example

Good Example (City of Covington)

- 3. Sewerage Facilities and Services System**
- 1. Meeting the Service Demands of Expanding Population Growth.** Recently, the City has experienced rapid population growth and this growth is expected to continue. According to the planning department, "With that growth, can our sewerage treatment facilities service? Capital planning is required to ensure that adequate services are available over the next 20 years."
 - 2. Diminishing Supply of Regional Water.** Sewage and land application criteria are conservative use of water. As a result, there may be future political pressure to develop water systems with reduced discharge, as opposed to continued use of supply systems or land application systems.
 - 3. Solid Waste Planning.** Both the City and County estimates are projecting under a 1994 Solid Waste Master Plan. Under water line, the Solid Waste Master Plan will need to be updated by 2008.
- 4. Sewerage Facilities and Services Options Available**
- 1. Expanding the City's Trail System.** The County Regional Authority has plans to expand the City's local system, providing both untreated and treated effluent and sewer connections between local housing and City destinations.

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Needs and Opportunities

Other Ideas...

- Identify observed trends or events then explain the specific needs and opportunities that may result. For example:
 - TREND** → Eleven percent increase in retired population since the last census.
 - NEEDS:**
 - ~Increased access to medical services
 - ~Greater variety in senior-oriented recreational activities
 - OPPORTUNITIES:**
 - ~Expanded volunteer base for local nonprofits
 - ~More potential daytime "neighborhood watch" members

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Standards and Examples

REQUIRED
for all

.....

COMMUNITY
GOALS

...

NEEDS &
OPPORTUNITIES

..

COMMUNITY
WORK PROGRAM

- **REQUIRED FOR ALL** communities
- Update **EVERY 5 YEARS** with in-depth community involvement.

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Community Work Program: Report of Accomplishments

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

- Report on the status of all the projects that were included on the last work program approved by DCA
- This is REALLY simple. Don't over-think it.
- It looks just like an STWP. Addition of columns for "Completed", "In-Progress", "Postponed", "Not Accomplished/Cancelled" Try to use the standard terms:

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Community Work Program

FROM THE RULES

Community Work Program. (Required for all local governments, updates required every five years.) ...the specific activities the community plans to undertake during the next five years ...This includes any activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems... to be put in place to implement the plan.... The Community work program must include....

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Community Work Program

- **Brief description of the activity;**
- **Legal authorization for the activity, if applicable;**
- **Timeframe for initiating and completing the activity;**
- **Responsible party for implementing the activity;**
- **Estimated cost (if any) of implementing the activity; and**
- **Funding source(s), if applicable.**

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Community Work Program

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

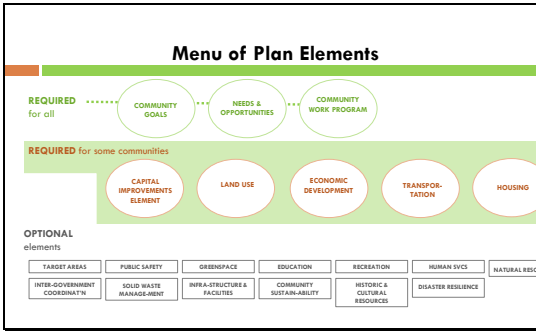
- This is simple. There's a basic template—just fill in ALL the blanks.
- This is the place for specific projects/activities. Avoid “projects” that begin with words like “encourage,” “promote” and “consider.”
- Focus both on the projects that will incrementally move you toward your vision over the long-term—AND—the projects that are necessary to meet the community's immediate needs
- No clear responsible party, cost estimate, funding source, and/or start and end dates → Probably a policy statement or a non-specific project

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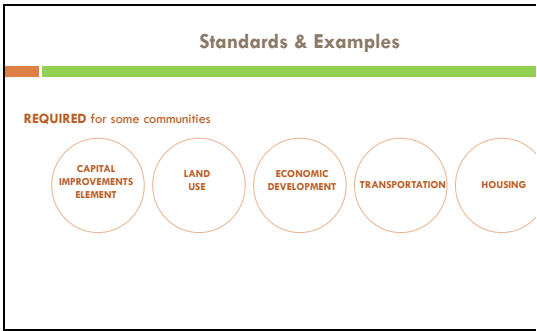
Community Work Program: *Good Example*

Community Agency Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019 Strategic Implementation Plan													Score					
Type of Initiative/ Strategy	Agency Explanation/Strategy	Responsibility	Fiscal Period												Cost	Funding Source	Status (On Track/At Risk/Not Started)	
			2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY	2018 FY				
Community Development Initiative	Creating an inventory of vacant and underutilized properties and land parcels to evaluate and identify parcels to be redeveloped and reimagined. Establishing land plans for preservation of resources, such as wetlands and coastal resources, to encourage re-development.	Community Development													\$0.00	GR (General Fund)	On Track	
Community Development Initiative	Conducting feasibility study to identify potential multi-unit residential and commercial projects in city center/urban planning districts.	Community Development														\$0.00	GR (General Fund)	On Track
Community Development Initiative	Developing a market study to determine demand for housing, dining and entertainment options.	Community Development														\$0.00	GR (General Fund)	On Track
Community Development Initiative	Establishing relationship of providing internet/gig work for residents and visitors to downtown area.	Community Development														\$0.00	GR (General Fund)	On Track
Public Works Initiative	Continuing construction plans for LEED Platinum LEA LEED Greenpower LEED Floor Area and 1000-Covered Area.	Public Works														\$0.00	GR (General Fund)	On Track

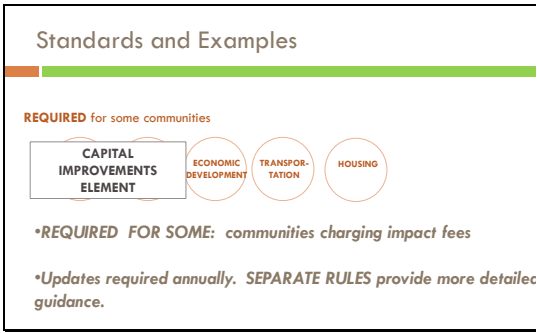
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Standards and Examples

REQUIRED for some communities

• **REQUIRED FOR SOME:** communities with zoning and similar development regs
• Update every 5 years
• Options:
• Traditional Land Use Map, and/or
• Character Area Map & Defining Narrative
↳ (also satisfies requirement for Community Goals element)

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Land-Use Map & Narrative

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

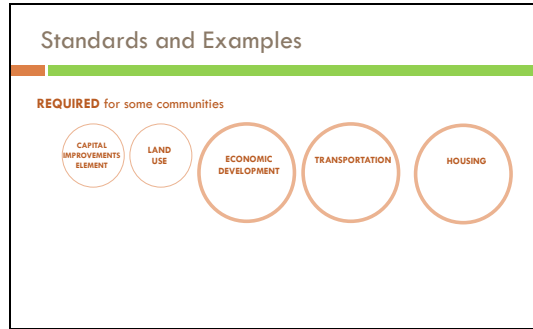
- ❑ No blank spots—entire community covered
- ❑ Parcel-specific, unlike a character area map
- ❑ Legend and map match!!!!
- ❑ Provide the map at a useful resolution—not blurry
- ❑ Use insets to provide better detail in dense areas
- ❑ A properly oriented North Arrow always helps
- ❑ Narrative simply explains what each land-use category is

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**From the City of :

Land-Use Map: Good Example

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From the NWGRC CEDS

Economic Development Element

Pull High-Priority Items from stand-alone Economic Development Plan into the Comprehensive Plan.

Goals & Policies →

The thumbnail image shows a document with the title 'Economic Development Element' and several sections of text, including 'Goals & Policies' and 'Needs & Opportunities'. The text is partially obscured by a large 'DRAFT' watermark.

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From the NWGRC CEDS

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Pull High-Priority Items from stand-alone Economic Development Plan into the Comprehensive Plan.

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[illegible]

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Standards & Examples

REQUIRED for qualifying communities

HOUSING ELEMENT

REQUIRED for HUD Entitlement communities

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[illegible]

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Menu of Plan Elements

The diagram illustrates a 'Menu of Plan Elements' for oil. It is divided into two main sections: 'REQUIRED' and 'OPTIONAL Elements (Examples)'. The 'REQUIRED' section is further divided into 'REQUIRED for all' and 'REQUIRED for some communities'. The 'REQUIRED for all' section includes a flowchart: 'COMMUNITY GOALS' leads to 'NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES', which leads to 'COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM'. The 'REQUIRED for some communities' section includes six elements: 'CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ELEMENT', 'LAND USE', 'ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT', 'TRANSPORTATION', and 'HOUSING'. The 'OPTIONAL Elements (Examples)' section includes a grid of 15 elements: 'TARGET AREAS', 'PUBLIC SAFETY', 'GREENSPACE', 'EDUCATION', 'RECREATION', 'HUMAN SVCS', 'NATURAL', 'INTER-GOVERNMENT COORDINATION', 'SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT', 'INFRA-STRUCTURE & FACILITIES', 'COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY', 'HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES', and 'DISASTER RESILIENCE'.

REQUIRED COMMUNITY GOALS NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

REQUIRED for all

REQUIRED for some communities:

- CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ELEMENT
- LAND USE
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- TRANSPORTATION
- HOUSING

OPTIONAL Elements (Examples)

TARGET AREAS	PUBLIC SAFETY	GREENSPACE	EDUCATION	RECREATION	HUMAN SVCS	NATURAL
INTER-GOVERNMENT COORDINATION	SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT	INFRA-STRUCTURE & FACILITIES	COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY	HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES	DISASTER RESILIENCE	

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Optional Elements

- Any of the 5 "Required for Some" elements can be used as "Optional" element for other communities
- You can take the "Required for Some" approach with any other free-standing plan you may have. Greenspace Plans, Rec Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, LCIs, Water/Sewer Plans, etc.
- If you don't have a free-standing, special purpose plan, this might be a good segue into that, or you might be able to simply wrap it into the comp planning process by just focusing very closely on it during plan development.

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Submitting the Plan

- Before Approval: Certification Letter**
 - Public Hearings were Conducted as Required by Law
 - Regional Water Plan was Consulted
 - "Part 5" Environmental Planning Criteria were Reviewed
- After Approval: Adoption Resolution**
 - Proves the plan was officially adopted by the local government. Legally grounds the plan and makes it the official foundation for future development decisions.

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Georgia
Department of COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
